The Black Cat

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For Fame, Money, or Love?

BY R. OTTOLENGUI.

I WAS supremely happy. I use the superlative because, in all truth, I had never been so happy before. The cause of this ecstatic condition was the very ordinary fact that I had asked Beatrice Van Alden to be my wife, and she had consented. I do not know what other men have felt under similar circumstances, but I can assure you that I thought myself a very superior sort of being. I held myself very erect as I walked down Broadway on my way to my office. Perhaps it might even be said that I "strutted." I don't know certainly. I believe that I blindly walked into several persons. I have an indistinct notion of apologizing more than once. At any rate, I am confident that I was excusable under the circumstances. A man feels such sensations as I was experiencing once only in a lifetime. This was my turn at happiness, as it were. I remember that I walked that morning because I felt compelled. I started in a horse car, but abandoned the stuffy vehicle after a single block. I could not endure confinement at such a time. You see I was so happy. And yet, when I look back upon that moment now, and view my situation critically, I see that had I been perfectly sane, I must have realized that I was actually in a serious predicament. I had asked Beatrice to marry me, and

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she had accepted, in a dainty little note which greeted me at breakfast. It had been a most foolhardy piece of presumption on my part to propose to her, for the reason that I often found it difficult to pay my own bills. How then could I meet even the expense of feeding and clothing a handsome woman accustomed to the good things of life, — to say nothing of providing for the possibilities of the future?

I had known Beatrice for only a few months, but with me it had been love at first sight. I had devoted all of my spare time, and much of my cash, to the gratification of her little desires. I paid her marked attention, and, before long, became satisfied that she was not indifferent to my suit. Discretion whispered to me to wait till I had built my dove cot before catching my dove, but love shrieked in my ears day and night, "Take her now, or you will lose her." This seemed quite possible, for she was constantly surrounded by an admiring circle of men, wherever she appeared. My final proposing had been precipitated the night before, by a streak of jealousy which overtook me whilst at the opera. I had bought a box, at considerable pecuniary sacrifice, and she and her mother had accompanied me. Much to my disgust, several men dropped in to visit, and remained to converse. One man, who posed in society as a German count, particularly annoyed me. He monopolized Beatrice as though she were his personal property. Worse than that, she seemed quite willing for him to do so. I think, now, that this was but a feminine trick to make me anxious, and so to hurry the crisis. At least it accomplished that result, for I left the box, obtained writing materials and penned a formal proposal of marriage, which I slipped into her hand at parting. The result was the aforementioned note of acceptance, and the coincident happiness, that this morning had already reached the pitch where I longed for a confidant.

It was in this frame of mind that I entered the building wherein I occupied a suite of two small rooms, upon the door of which appeared my name, with the attractive words "Attorney at Law" beneath. As I stood awaiting the elevator, I mechanically allowed my eyes to run down a list of names of the other occupants. Suddenly my attention was arrested by one which seemed quite familiar,— that of Andrew Manning. I had known

a man by that name at college, where we had been close friends. After graduating, however, I entered the law school, whilst he went abroad, and I had never seen him since. On the way up, I spoke to the elevator boy, and my curiosity was whetted. From his account, it seemed that this Andrew Manning not only had his business offices in the building, but had taken a large suite here, where he lived in bachelor style. I at once sought his rooms. The office door was still locked, but upon ringing the bell-knob at the next door I was received by a servant, who, in response to my inquiries, said that Mr. Manning had gone out to breakfast, but would soon return. Upon expressing a wish to wait, I was ushered into a really cosy parlor, which at first impressed me as the most luxuriously comfortable little box that I had ever entered. The next moment I experienced a sensation of oddity in my surroundings, whose cause I was at a loss to name, as everything seemed so entirely in keeping with everything else that there was no incongruity. Yet there was an unconventionality about that assailed the senses. At length I discovered the primary cause. The walls, ceiling, and carpet were black. The latter, upon closer scrutiny, I found was not a solid black, as it appeared, but a black background into which figures were interwoven in dark blue. The effect was very rich. The walls were covered with jet-black cartridge paper, but this was relieved at intervals by small *fleur-de-lis* in burnished blue steel. The ceiling was covered with the same paper, studded with silver stars, arranged exactly as are the constellations in the heavens. In one corner was a crescent moon, which could be illuminated by electricity so as to light the room by night. A few of the planets could also be made to serve as electric lamps. The somberness which would ordinarily prevail in such a room was entirely obviated by the furnishings. Rich Daghestan rugs, and heavy silk Oriental portières in warm colors, partly lightened up the prevailing blackness, whilst the walls were so covered with pictures in gilded frames that the papering served only to heighten the general effect. The furniture was all in bright, though not gaudy, colors.

After taking in my surroundings in a general view, I began to walk around for closer inspection of the pictures, many of which I found to be rare gems. Presently I stopped before a frame

which excited my curiosity to the utmost. Whereas the other pictures had all been paintings in water-color, or in oil, this was merely a photograph, a portrait of a woman. That much I could discern, though I could not see the features. What riveted my attention was this: The photograph was a small card, cabinet size, placed in a rather large frame, surrounded by a wide mat. Covering the picture entirely was a black veil folded several times, and fastened to the glass at each corner by a red seal. This arrangement in itself was curious enough, but the mystery was heightened by the fact that a small gold hook had been driven into the upper edge of the frame, and that from this hook was suspended a bit of blue ribbon, at each end of which was tied a solitaire diamond ring. What could it mean? I had barely asked myself the question, when a footstep in the adjoining room warned me that Mr. Manning had returned. Reflecting that after all it might not be my friend, and that, in any event, it would not be pleasant to be caught in front of a picture so suggestive of a secret history, probably of a personal character, I hastily stepped across the floor and dropped into a chair. A moment later Mr. Manning entered, and, though changed, I at once recognized him as my old college chum. I arose and greeted him effusively, as was natural in my happy frame of mind. He took my hand cordially, remembering me also, but his manner was by no means demonstrative. On the contrary, I detected a certain reserve, a sort of dignified quietness of speech, which at first jarred upon me. Indeed I felt almost as though I had made a mistake in calling, and that my old friend was not overjoyed at renewing my acquaintance. In this, however, I was entirely wrong, for upon my attempting to depart, he peremptorily insisted upon my remaining to talk over old times. After that we became almost chummy,—at least I did, though he still exhibited that phlegmatism which was so foreign to his character, as I recalled it. Finally, in spite of this reserve, I began to feel so much at home with him that I ventured to direct the conversation to the veiled picture.

"I suppose, Andrew," said I, "you must have traveled in many countries since we last met; you have brought home such a number of curios from foreign climes."

"Another evidence, my friend," he replied, "of a poor deduction from good premises. Most of the pictures and *bric-à-brac* about this room attest a personal collection in many countries. But there their value as evidence ceases. I did not collect them myself; I simple inherited them."

"Inherited them?" I asked. "Why, none of your family have died, I hope?"

"No, but a very dear friend. You may even remember him. He was at college with us a short time, — a senior whilst we were sophomores, — Julius Kraig!"

"Not the tall, blond fellow, who was daft on the subject of music?"

"The same. He went abroad immediately after graduation, and traveled everywhere. I eventually met him in Paris. We became great friends and remained so till he died."

"What a pity that he should have died so young. For though we used to guy him, I always thought that he had the seeds of genius in him." Here I determined to venture upon a bold stroke. "But, tell me, Manning, why do you drape his picture with crêpe?"

"How do you mean? Oh! I see! You have been looking around my room, and allude to the veiled picture. You are wrong. That is not Kraig's portrait, though the crêpe, as you term it, is there as a memento of him."

"How? I do not understand."

"My friend, you have unwittingly touched upon a subject which is very painful to me; one upon which I seldom speak. But you are my old college chum, and I see that, unlike myself, you have retained your youth. I will tell you the story of that picture if you wish, but I warn you that it might be better for you not to hear it."

"Why? How can it affect me?"

"By shattering some of your ideals. By affecting your faith in human kind. Shall I speak?"

"If you please!" I was too anxious to hear the story to hesitate for such a seeming trifle.

"That you may fully comprehend the strange tale," began Manning, "I must first tell you something about Kraig. As you

have admitted, he was a genius. A greater musical genius has never lived, perhaps, and yet he dies without fame, almost unknown! I became very intimate with him shortly after reaching Paris. He had a bachelor suite on the Rue de la Paix. His principal room, a combination of parlor, smoking-room, and study, was fitted up exactly as this one is. Indeed, everything that is in this room was in his, except that picture which is veiled. Even the wall-paper and ceiling I brought over with me."

He paused, and I stared about with renewed interest in my surroundings. I began almost to feel that it was uncanny, this scheme of inheriting a man's belongings, and perpetuating his living-rooms to such an extreme as Manning had done. One could almost fancy that, if such things can be, Kraig's ghost would be about the place.

"Kraig had an odd theory about music," resumed Manning. His idea was like this: A man is an embodied spirit. Thought is an attribute of the spiritual man. Language is, as it were, thought materialized; a necessary form of transmitting thought, essential to the physical man, but not used at all by spirits. In simpler language, — Articulate words are used by physical man to convey his thoughts to other physical men. Some thinkers claim that the spirit not only abandons words, but does not even employ any form of sound with which to convey thought. Kraig counted this a gross error. He argued that if a spirit could perceive the thought of another spirit, clairvoyantly, magnetically, or in any manner which would exclude the will power of the thinker, it would be manifest at once that thought would be useless, since it would be universally known as soon as conceived. Or, at least, spirits would cease to exist as separate individuals, and must necessarily combine as a single mind. Such a theory would destroy utterly our preconceived notions of immortality. The individual would no longer exist as an individual, and at death would simply be swallowed up by this one great spirit mind. This idea is abhorrent to us. Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly, thus far," I replied.

"Very well. The next step is to explain Kraig's notion of the transmission of thought in the spiritual world. This is accomplished, he believed, by means of music."

"By music? How ridiculous. Then the angels would all sing to each other?"

"Exactly so; but remember, they would not sing words. Words belong to the material sphere. Kraig claimed, with much reason, that the spiritual is present in man the animal, since man thinks and gives expression to his thoughts. This he does in two ways: by spoken words, the material method; and by music, the spiritual method."

"I don't quite grasp that," I objected.

"Yet it is perfectly simple. Your composer of music is merely a man who thinks out his ideas, and sets them down in musical tones instead of in words. This truth, of course, has not been grasped as yet by the multitude, but it is only like the many others that we pass by, because they are so constantly present with us that we do not observe them. Kraig then argued thus: Here are two methods of conveying thought, — spoken words, and music. By the mathematical axiom, 'things equal to the same thing must be equal to each other.' Consequently, for every word in a language there must he an exact equivalent in a musical tone, since each represents a thought. The converse is not true, however, for the reason that the language of words is very incomplete, many fine shadings of thought being so incommunicable in one language, that we are forced constantly to borrow from others to meet our wants. Even the sum of all the languages of the earth cannot express thought as accurately as can music, for there must be as many variations of a musical tone as there can be conceivable phases of thought. Thus the spiritual transcends the material."

"But granting all this, to what does it lead?"

"It led Kraig to a wonderful invention. He explained to me that whilst there could be no accurate equivalent of all musical tones in spoken words, at the same time it is quite possible that music composed by a material man would so differ from true spiritual music that, whilst the latter would not be transcribable to human tongue, the former, probably, would contain no ideas that could not be translated into words. This, because the mind in its material environment would not think in music much beyond what the tongue could express in words. Do you get that?"

"Perfectly."

"Kraig's hope was to invent a new musical instrument which would accurately translate music. To be more explicit, his instrument when played upon would respond, not in ordinary tones, as does the piano, harp, or violin, but in actual spoken words, which words would be the equivalent, in thought, of the musical tones of the composition. In other words, the instrument, played upon like a piano, would respond somewhat as though a human voice were singing. Thus we should have the spoken words and musical tones blended in a single expression of thought. Was not that a grand idea?"

"It sounds like insanity to me," I said dubiously.

"And to me, also, at first. Finally, however, I accepted the whole theory but endeavored to discourage Kraig from attempting the impossible. He would listen to my argument and shrug his shoulders with a smile, saying, 'Nothing is impossible! Man may accomplish what he wills! If it is conceivable in thought, it is possible! The impossible cannot be conceived. The only difficulty is that the material man may wear out before the spiritual accomplishes his purpose. This, however, is no argument against endeavor, for what is unfinished in this life may be completed in another. We will begin where we leave off. So all progress counts in the total sum.' Thus, you see, it was not easy to prevent Kraig from pursuing his hobby. Now I come to the story of the picture."

Manning paused a moment, but I remained silent. Presently he began again.

"In Paris I met and loved a beautiful girl. To make this part of my tale brief, I will only say that after a few months' acquaintance I was made excessively happy by her accepting me as her future husband. At the time, I had not seen Kraig for several days. I had never spoken to him of my love, because he always seemed so wrapped up in his music that all other topics of conversation were excluded. It was three days after my engagement when I walked up the stairs that led to Kraig's apartments. I had become so intimate that I did not even knock, but turning the door-knob I entered this room, or, rather, the room which was like this. Kraig was not there, but before I

could look for him elsewhere I observed a new piece of furniture. It looked like a piano, and yet it was dissimilar, too, being like an upright piano, but double the usual length. Like a flash it broke upon me that this was Kraig's new instrument. I advanced to examine it, and, raising the lid, I noted the white ivory keys. There were no black ones. My curiosity was at once so great that I could not wait for Kraig's return. I was possessed with the desire to hear this instrument sing. I may say sing, because I have no other word that will express it. An evidence, you see, of the poverty of language. I touched a key and produced a prolonged 'Oh–h–h,' which was so like grief that I released the note quickly. I glanced around in search of some music and observed a freshly written manuscript lying upon Kraig's desk. This evidently was a composition made expressly for the new instrument. I took it with uppressed excitement, and with trembling fingers I began to play."

"Well?" I asked excitedly, as Manning paused. I was now thoroughly aroused by his weird tale.

"My friend," he continued, "I hope you will never experience the agony which was mine during the next few minutes. As soon as I pressed the notes indicated in the manuscript, a voice as from another world spoke, or sang, or chanted, — what you will; no words describe it. It was a combination of musical tones of supremest purity with words in English. There was the only incongruity or discord. The harsh gutturals of our language sounded out of place, and yet they told a sad tale that has been burned into my brain. I will repeat the words to you. The composition was entitled, 'The Wail of a Broken Heart.' The music began in a monotonous but melodious chant whose opening stanzas were devoted to an impassioned defense of the constancy of men, whose love, so the poet-musician declared, was no less often betrayed than was that of women. Then, leaping from the general to the particular the chant continued: —

"'This I know, that I, myself,
Am just that doting fool that trusted all to one
She came into my life but five short months ago,
Yet in that brief, sweet space of time, I've dreamed of joy

So great, that I have pitied those in Paradise
Who died unhallowed by such love as I thought mine!

"'In these fantastic visions I have seen myself
By emp'rors crowned. In fancy have been hailed
Music's greatest master! Musician, world-renowned!

"'But dearer yet than emp'ror's crown, within my heart
I prized the smile of love upon my sweetheart's lips.
For she it was whose sacred love had aided me
To reach the pinnacle of fame. But these were dreams!

"Here the melody changed, this time wailing out in mournful cadences the story of how, an hour before, all the composer's hopes had been dispelled by a brief note from the woman he had worshipped.

"'Twas thus she wrote: "Forgive me, Love!" What mockery
To use that word! "But I must tell the truth. Alas!
I have deceived thee. My love cannot enrich thy life!
I think I have no love — no heart — but in its stead
Ambition stirs my soul. To share thy fame I would
Have joined my life to thine. But I have changed my mind,
And now give all for wealth, which hath the mystic pow'r
To buy whate'er the heart may crave, including fame,
And love, perchance. And so I sell my love for gold!
For wealth I sell myself — and thee! Farewell! Forgive.

"'O God! that one so fair in form should be so foul
In soul! Ah! well! 'Tis over! Ended! Done! But — '

"Here the voice ceased, for the composition had never been completed. By an odd chance, however, I once more rested my hands upon the keys, absorbed amidst a riot of thoughts, when to my horror the voice again was heard, a terrifying shriek, ending in a prolonged moan, as from a soul in purgatory. I quickly lifted my hands, and silence reigned. At length this became so oppressive that I hurried from the room in search of Kraig."

Manning was silent a moment, overcome by the emotions aroused by the recollection of the scene which he had depicted.

"I found him in his bedroom," he continued. "He lay prone

on the floor, with blood oozing from his mouth. I hastened to him, but he was already dead. A post-mortem became necessary, and it was discovered that the heart muscle had actually been ruptured. He had literally died of a broken heart. I found in his tightly closed hand a copy of the letter referred to in the music. The words were identically the same, so you see how accurately he had transcribed his thoughts into musical composition, and how admirably his instrument had portrayed his emotions as well as his music. The greatest shock to me was yet to come. I found the envelope in which the note had been folded, and within it was a diamond ring, one of those now hanging upon the ribbon. The inscription gave the name of the girl who had thus rudely sundered her engagement and killed my friend."

"Well?" I muttered, half expecting what he would say.

"Oh! I read there the name of the woman to whom I was engaged, that is all."

He left his seat abruptly and went to the window, with a low, empty laugh, which made my heart turn chill. I sat silent, with a portentous feeling of some impending evil. I deeply regretted that I had tempted him into this recital. Now, I understood it all. The veiled picture was that woman's portrait. The two rings were her two engagement tokens, presented to her by Kraig and by Manning. Presently he turned and came towards me. Standing near me, he continued with perfect control of his voice, and in that phlegmatic tone which now I comprehended. He had learned self-repression.

"You see," he went on, "poor Kraig, upon receiving that cruel letter, had, evidently, tried to drown his sorrow in his music. His great instrument had just been completed. Fame was within his grasp, when this blow which slew his love came upon him. With indomitable will he at once realized that, while his heart was so stirred, he might, perhaps, compose a masterpiece. So he sat down to write his own sad story in that spirit language, music. It was a master stroke of spirit over matter. His will would surmount the pain that a woman had caused him. Alas! Poor man! Even in the midst of this grand effort of the spirit to show its supremacy, the link that bound his soul to this earth was rudely snapped — his material self ceased to exist. The shock

had broken his heart, and so his beautiful spirit was released. But I? I was still alive to face precisely the agony which he had thus escaped. The same note which told him that the woman would have married him for his fame, confessed that she accepted me for my wealth. Of course that ended all. I covered her face with the veil, and hung the two rings where you see them. I took Kraig's things and brought them here. His rooms I have reproduced as you see, and because I wish to live alone. I have done the eccentric thing of making my home in an office building, away from the regular dwellings of the city. A morbid fancy, if you wish to consider it so. As to the wonderful instrument, that was injured on the way over, and was dumb when I opened it. Kraig being dead, there was none who could restore it."

"But what became of the girl?" I asked thoughtlessly.

"I do not know," he said absently. "To me Beatrice is dead!"

"Beatrice?" I asked with sudden surprise. "Did you say Beatrice?"

"Did I?" he asked, still dreamily. "I don't know. Perhaps I did. It was her name. Beatrice Van Alden."

No sooner had the words fallen from his lips than I started to my feet and rushed from the room. He tried to stay my flight, alarmed, I suppose, by my appearance; but I eluded him and rushed down the stairs and out of the building, never heeding where I went. All I knew was that my happiness had suddenly ceased. For hours I wandered about the streets like one crazed. When he told me that she — that woman who had been death to poor Kraig and misery to himself — that she was Beatrice Van Alden, my Beatrice, the pain at my heart was so keen that I would cheerfully have accepted surcease by sharing Kraig's fate. At last one ray of hope penetrated to my heart. She had accepted Kraig for his fame, and Manning for his wealth. Why had she accepted me? I have neither genius with which to win fame, nor that wealth which she counts so potent. Why then had she accepted me? For love. Why else? Then, after all, is not love the greatest power, and has not her heart at last been found by me? Then why not accept the situation, forget this horrible tale, and marry Beatrice? What would you do in my place?

"A No Account Niggah."

BY LEONARD M. PRINCE, U. S. A.

HIS name was Rafferty. How a coffee-colored mulatto came by it, no one knew. When the batch of recruits with which he reported were distributed, "L" Troop found him on its rolls.

He seemed only a boy, not more than nineteen, and possessed of a boy's carelessness. From the start he was continually getting into trouble. Nothing serious, for he was not vicious; simply little things. But it is attention to little things that makes up a good portion of a soldier's existence, and, in this respect, Rafferty was the trial of his troop commander's life.

He had started as a trumpeter, but a few months later was sent back to the ranks. "He's de most triflin' niggah, suh, in de hul field-music," explained the old band leader to the regimental adjutant, the day Rafferty lost his trumpeter's stripes. "He kin play ef he wants to, but he nevah wants to," Nelson added, shaking his grizzled head angrily at the boy, who stood there, cap in hand, the picture of injured innocence Whenever it came his turn to act as room orderly, he seldom failed getting either himself or some other man hauled over the coals, owing to a habit he had of sweeping the dirt of the squad room under some bunk and then forgetting to remove it before the morning inspection was made. The first time he was assistant cook, he made half the troop deathly sick by making their coffee in an old soup boiler that he had neglected to scour out. He was nearly mobbed in consequence, but, upon hearing that he had been made sick by drinking his own coffee, the troop finally let him off. In a few months his captain heartily wished he had never heard the name of Rafferty.

Nearly every morning old Jordan, the first sergeant, would report some fresh trouble that the youngster had got himself into

the day before, always ending his tale of woe with the remark, "He suttinly, suh, is a most no account niggah." One day it was the fact that Rafferty had planted all the onions in the company garden with their roots up that roused the sergeant's wrath. Another time it was the lad's use of emery on the inside of his carbine, — as he said, to get it bright, — with the result that the rifling was ruined, and with it the shooting powers of his gun.

The stable sergeant was about the only one who had a good word for him. "He may be wuthless," the latter once said, "but he do know 'ow to take care uv a hoss and he kin ride along side de best man in de troop."

This latter fact was Captain Torrey's only consolation the following April when "L" Troop went into the field. It was hard work, that scouting in New Mexico, hard alike on man and horse. Yet with all the bruises, rough riding, and scanty rations, there were no signs of discontent on any of the dusky faces that made up the rank and file.

When a horse slipped and carried its rider clattering down some steep arroyo, the latter, as he emerged, covered with dust and grime and oftentimes with some nasty cuts or bruises, would receive some such greeting as, "Yo-ho, yer rides a hoss lak a dough-boy." "Don't you know, niggah, a hoss warn't a camel wid a hump to hole on by?"

This life just suited Rafferty. There was no perpetual polishing of brasses, cleaning of clothes, or blacking of boots, as in barracks. To be sure, he had to keep his horse in good condition, his carbine and revolver serviceable, but these tasks he really enjoyed. Besides, his bunk didn't need to be swept under each morning, as in barracks, for here mother earth was his couch, and his saddle his pillow. There was no cook's police with its everlasting scouring of pans and washing of dishes. Here every man carried his own things and took care of them in his own way.

Each night he sat about the camp fire and drank in the stories of scouts of years gone by. He looked on old Jordan with greater awe than ever, when he heard of how the latter with twenty-five men had defended the women and children at Fort Tuleroso, when Victoria and over a hundred Apaches attacked it in the

absence of the troops. The medal of honor that he had seen the first sergeant wear on a few state occasions, when the troop was paraded, took on a new meaning to him as he heard the particulars of how it was won at Las Animas Cañon, where Jordan's coolness had saved the troop from destruction.

Other tales he heard of how men lived and died in the old days "rite aftah de wah," when the regiment had been in Texas and Arizona. Some of them were grewsome enough, especially those of the torture that the Apaches inflicted on prisoners, and the oft-repeated remark of the stable sergeant, "Yeh bin a heap bettah off ef yeh fights till dey kills yeh, fo' bullits don't hu't lak fire," sank deep into his mind.

Late one afternoon in May, when they had been over a month in the field and were heading towards Fort Wingate for repairs, two prospectors came into camp with the news of another Apache outbreak. Victoria, Nunez, or other equally reckless renegades, were at their old tricks again, driving off cattle, burning houses, and killing the owners thereof. It was just their regular spring outing. They would be chased to their mountain fastnesses after an all-summer's campaign, then surrender and go back to the reservation, only to repeat this game of hide-and-seek the next year. The Great Father was very patient with his Indian children, and after catching seldom punished them. Captain Torrey knew all this but too well. If he could only get word to Wingate in time, they might get the hostiles between two fires and thus give the band a much-needed beating.

The prospectors brought word that the Indians were heading towards the Big Dry Wash, but could be intercepted by troops from Wingate if the latter got word the next morning.

Sixty miles of rough riding in ten hours. That was what it meant to get news to Wingate, with chances ten to one of the messenger being killed on the road. The troop could ill spare a man, as it was none too strong for the work now before it. Yet a despatch must be sent, and that, too, without delay. He was a raw recruit indeed who didn't know the danger this detail brought. Messengers had gone out before from the troop and had never returned.

So a hush fell on the chattering group of men when the first

sergeant came up and ordered Thomas to report to the captain. A short, heavy-set man rose painfully to his feet as he heard the sergeant speak, but cheerily said, "Well, boys, I guess that hits me." The men eyed him in silence for a moment, each mentally reckoning his chances of getting through. One of them, slowly lifting a piece of bacon from the fire, at length drawled out, "He ain't fit. Yeh know de fall dat he had day fo' yesterday. You'd bettah le' me go." And, suiting his actions to his words, the speaker went to his kit and began getting it ready, as if nothing more was to be said.

It was Rafferty, Rafferty the careless, Rafferty the worthless, Rafferty about whom Thomas himself had once declared that he couldn't "foh Gawd see w'at de recruitin' officer was thinkin' uv w'en he enlisted sich trash."

Old Jordan shook his head doubtfully at such a proposition, saying, "I'll have to see de captin fust." But Rafferty went on with his preparations, and had about finished when the answer came back, "Hit's all right. Yer to repo't in a half hour fo' yer orders. Yer to have yer pick uv de hosses."

The youngster simply nodded and replied, "I'll tak m' own." A half hour later Rafferty was riding out of camp on that big raw-boned bay that, according to the boy, "had blood in 'im, suh." In his ears were ringing the words of that old army song that the troop had started as he waved his hand in farewell. The echoes still floated over the gravel and sandy wastes about him: —

"Oh de drums would roll
Upon me soul,
Dis am de way we'd go,
Fo'ty miles a day on beans an' hay,
In de regular Army Oh."

But Rafferty was thinking only of the parting instructions of Captain Torrey, which were, "Follow our trail back to Las Animas Cañon and then go due north till you strike the road to Wingate. Give these despatches to the commandant there. Spare your horse all you can the first half. It's a good sixty miles and you must make it to-night."

Little had Rafferty besides his ammunition and despatches.

Every superfluous weight was laid aside, since each extra ounce counts as pounds before a sixty-mile ride is finished. Save when here and there some coyote set up his mocking howl, the voices of the night were silent. Unusually so it seemed to the boy as he urged his horse onward into the darkness.

At first every shadow was an Apache, every hollow, every bit of cactus concealed a hostile Indian. But that wore off in time. The rising moon brought him light, and with light came courage.

The night was nearly over and the worst of his journey was over with it. Not more than ten miles of the Wingate trail remained to be traversed. Still he jogged on, now at a sharp walk, now at a gallop, but most often at the slow trot that is the cavalry man's main reliance in putting those long western miles behind him.

Already the light of another day was seen in the east, yet the sandy wastes about him looked doubly desolate in the morning twilight. Wearied by the long ride, he found himself nodding in the saddle in spite of his efforts to remain awake. Suddenly, without warning, his tired horse snorted with terror and made a quick leap to one side, that would have unseated almost any other rider than Rafferty.

The latter was all attention now. Unconsciously, his right hand reached down and loosened the flap of the holster as he gathered his horse and peered forward into the dim light of the morning. Before he could make up his mind how to act, a low, plaintive cry came stealing across the sand from his left. As he heard it, all the stories of ghosts and hoodoos that had tormented him during the early watches of the night came back with redoubled force. It seemed as if his heart thumped louder than the kettledrums of the band at dress parade.

In the shadowy light he could see the dark body of a man stretched out before him on the sand. Another glance showed him that it was that of a cavalry sergeant, still clutching his carbine in one hand and a half-filled canteen in the other. As he reined in his frightened steed for a closer look, that cry came again, but this time louder, plainer than before.

Then his courage came back. Wheeling his horse to the left,

he rode slowly in the direction of the sound. Even in that dim gray light, one glance was enough. Two soldiers and a boy, nine or ten years old, jumped by Indians, and horses killed. The two little heaps of empty shells were silent witnesses as to how the men had stood off the savages till nightfall. Both had evidently died of their wounds during the night; one, the sergeant, while trying to bring water to the others. The boy was still living, though apparently wounded in the head.

It took but a moment for Rafferty to dismount, replace the rough bandage that had fallen from the boy's head, and then lift the little fellow into the saddle in front of him. Holding the child in his disengaged arm, the trooper gave his tired horse the spur and again hastened down the Wingate trail.

The morning sun was beginning to fleck the tops of the foothills with bright bits of gold, as horse and rider clattered down a dry wash that told him he was nearing his journey's end. The little fellow on his arm kept moaning from time to time as he lay limp and helpless against the breast of the young cavalry man. Just as his horse was wearily climbing the farther bank, Rafferty saw three naked figures running low along the bed of the wash five hundred yards away. It needed no second look to tell even his inexperienced eyes that they were Mescalero Apaches.

With spur and word he urged his poor overladen horse onward. For a few brief moments he drew away from them. Could he keep it up half an hour, he would be in sight of Wingate. Every bit of sage-brush and greasewood that he passed seemed burned into his brain. He rode, so he thought, for hours, though the sun was barely up. He kept glancing to the rear now and then, but saw nothing more of his pursuers. He even began to flatter himself, as he galloped down the broad trail, that he had distanced them or else passed unnoticed.

But only a recruit like Rafferty would have indulged in thoughts like these at such a time. No old campaigner against Victoria, Nunez, Geronimo, or any of their relatives would ever hope to pass an Apache unnoticed, or to distance him on a tired troop horse, even though the Indians were on foot. Nor did Rafferty think so a moment later, when, apparently from the very

sage-brush, some six hundred yards from the trail, sprang three dusky forms bent on cutting him off.

He plunged his spurs again and again into his horse's sides, but even horse-flesh has its limits of endurance and the poor beast failed to respond. Seeing the hopelessness of escape in that direction, Rafferty, like a hunted hare, abruptly wheeled to the right and started for the foot-hills. What he expected to do if he reached them, he never knew. It was like a drowning man catching at a straw.

The child had now become a heavy burden both to him and to his horse, but never once did the trooper falter in his course, or think of saving himself at the expense of the little fellow on his arm. On, on he plunged. Soon the wicked swish, swish of the bullets could be heard. Spat, spat they went in the sand about him. Once it seemed as if a red-hot iron seared his ankle. His foot dropped from the stirrup, but he felt no further pain. The horse suddenly shied to one side, staggered and fell heavily, throwing Rafferty and the child headlong among the rocks and sage-bush. Quickly as he could recover himself, he threw the child behind the dying horse and, painfully crawling forward, recovered his carbine.

On came his pursuers, clad only in the breech-clout, their long black hair streaming in the wind. It took him but a moment to slip in a cartridge and open on the nearest of the Apaches. As the smoke cleared away he stared in amazement; not a soul was in sight. A second later he dropped flat as he saw a puff of smoke come from behind a solitary piece of sage, some four hundred yards away, that looked too small to hide a bird, much less a human being.

Rafferty immediately opened fire on that sage-bush and every other suspicious clump within range. Every now and then he would see puffs of smoke that kept coming nearer and nearer, and would hear the spat of the bullets in the carcass of the old troop horse or on the rocks back of him. And so half an hour passed. As the boy took off his belt for greater ease in firing, he saw, to his horror, that scarcely ten cartridges were left him out of his sixty. Soon these would be gone, and then —?

Suddenly, as if in answer to his question, the firing of the

Indians ceased. He thought they were again creeping forward, and wasted five of those precious cartridges on bits of bunch grass two hundred yards away. Then, lying flat on the ground, he listened. Was it the thumping of his own heart that he heard? No, it couldn't be. That faint but regular thud, thud, thud, could come only from a troop of cavalry sweeping forward on a gallop.

Soon they burst on his view over the swell of ground on his right. He tried to raise himself to his feet, but toppled over in the attempt. Again he tried, and this time, using his carbine as a crutch, was successful. Never in his short service had he seen a finer sight than that of the troop advancing, flankers and skirmishers well ahead. On they swept with a ringing cheer as they saw Rafferty stand up beside his dead horse. A moment later one of the troopers reined up before him. "Hi there," he called, "dey come mighty close to catchin' ye dat time. Are ye hu't?"

"Not much; got some despatches fur de kunnel, tho', an' I found this 'ere boy little way back. He's hu't some."

"My, if that ain't Captain Thurston's boy who we's a-lookin' fo'."

The troop commander stopped any further conversation by ordering four men to take the wounded soldier and the child back to the post as fast as horse-flesh could carry them. The other troopers pressed on in pursuit of the Indians.

. . . . . .

An hour later they lifted Rafferty from the saddle before the colonel. The boy attempted a feeble salute as he handed his despatches to that officer.

"Take that man to the surgeon at once. He's badly hurt," said the latter, as he saw the blood-splashed boot the soldier wore. The doctor, after cutting the boot away, found that the bones of the ankle had been utterly crushed. He shook his head, muttering, "I don't see how he has lasted so long." Then turning to the boy he said, "Rafferty, I've got to cut off your foot. It's only hanging by a thread."

"Nevah mind, doctah," said the young trooper, suddenly raising

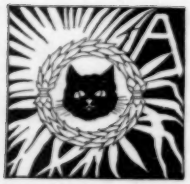
himself up in bed. "Boys," he added, "hit's erbout time ter open another box uv hardtack," — and then collapsed.

. . . . . .

Two days later, after the fight at Big Dry Wash, when the troop first heard of his death, the stable sergeant glanced around and said, "Well, fo' a no account niggah, he had lots uv sand." And no man said him nay.

A Hundred Thousand Dollar Trance.

BY EUGENE SHADE BISBEE.



HALF dozen greeting voices rang out from the group who were toasting themselves before the blazing fireside of the Bohemian Club, as Lloyd entered and approached them with his easy stride.

"Heard the news, haven't you, Lloyd?" asked one of the toasting group.

"I can't say — which news, Barton?" returned the other, at the same time accepting a hot toddy from the hand of an attendant.

"Of course I mean the news about our distinguished guest for the evening, Dr. Goode."

"I heard he was to be here, if that's what you mean; anything else?"

"Only that we are to have something entirely new on hypnotism, psychology, and occultism, — what you will, — in fact, our eyes are to be profoundly opened, if the word of our distinguished friend and president is to be taken; for Norris says the learned doctor will spring a few things on us that will put us to thinking."

"Coals to Newcastle, my dear boy — an old story — all the fellows have it, and are on the *qui vive* to catch the first news. I just came from the 'Holland,' and Claridge and Wentworth had me collar and elbow for an hour about it; 'twas all I could do to get away at all. Time the old fellow was here, isn't it?"

Lloyd glanced at the clock over the fireplace, handed his emptied glass to the servant, and then, first looking inquiringly about the room, dropped into a rocker, drew a cigarette from his pocket, struck a match, and settling himself comfortably, was at once one of the waiting assembly, all alert for the next comer.

His last inquiry was answered by the appearance of the man in

question, — Dr. Goode, — who came in with Norris, the genial president of the club, and with a nod to the group passed on toward the library.

The Bohemian Club was an organization of talented men in varied walks of life, who had, for mutual advantage and pleasure, leagued themselves together into one of these gregarious associations which find so much favor in big cities. Hidden away in the very heart of the metropolis, the club was as much apart from its noise and traffic as if it had been ensconced beneath the green foliage of some South Sea isle; within its portals were to be found treasures no other could boast; pictures hung upon its walls which bore signatures world famous in the new and reigning school; and, best of all, these very men were to be found beside the cheery fireside. Original manuscripts of celebrated books, and scores of operas, popular songs, masterpieces of sculpture, volumes of prose and poetry, all bearing their authors' signatures, filled the rooms, until the cozy place was a veritable museum of autographical treasure. No great man became its guest who did not leave with the club some such impress of his visit, and none touched our shores who failed to share its hospitality. Its membership was limited to a score, but upon the occasion of its monthly dinners, each member was entitled to a card of invitation for one friend; and the character of the entertainment offered was of such a nature that these cards were most eagerly sought. On this particular night there was not a single vacant chair when the president opened the festivities with the formal "Gentlemen, I greet you," in a small "sherry-and-bitters," which was drunk by all standing. Then for an hour or more the thirty odd of us devoted ourselves to one of the club's famous dinners, spiced by a merry story, half overheard here and there, told by some one to his neighbor, and the occasional response to an impromptu toast suggested *à propos* by another. Finally, when the last course had been served and the brandy and coffee gave place to sparkling champagne, our president arose, and, smilingly bowing to us all first, and then toward the guest upon his right, said, "Gentlemen, allow me to present to you one whose name alone, long since become a by-word in the scientific world, is sufficient introduction, the world-famous psychologist, who has

honored us by his presence to-night, Dr. Richardson Goode, of London."

A burst of applause greeted his words, as Dr. Goode arose and faced the company. The appearance of the man would have claimed attention anywhere; tall and powerfully made, he dominated the assembly not merely by his figure, but by a face whose most striking feature was a pair of piercing gray eyes that gleamed from beneath bushy black brows. To add to this impression of strength, the smooth-shaven face was deeply lined, the jaw was square and determined, in fact, his whole presence was both massive and imposing.

As his eyes wandered with an amiable gleam from face to face until they fell on my own, I seemed to feel that they were looking right *into* me rather than merely *at* me, and I recall wondering at the time if others felt their influence in the same way. But there was small time for such speculation then, for, in a full, deep voice, that eminently became the man, he began a talk on the new developments of hypnotism, that, as he warmed to his subject, became so intensely interesting as to rivet the entire attention of his audience and hold them spellbound. Of course we had all seen and read of experiments in this subtle science, but none of us had ever heard of such marvelous results as Dr. Goode claimed not only to have witnessed, but to actually be able to accomplish himself. Receiving our silent acknowledgment of the fact that many things could be achieved through hypnotic suggestion, he went so far as to state that it was entirely possible to cause any disease to actually manifest itself upon a subject to whom it had been suggested, while under the spell of the operator, that he had the disease. He claimed that the entire physical organism of man was so influenced by the brain that results suggested would speedily follow the trial. A man to whom liquor was a most nauseating dose, drank it greedily and with most evident enjoyment when told by the doctor that he was very fond of it. This we could not gainsay, but if his assertions had up to this point met with no open opposition, so much cannot be said for the startling one which we were called upon to accept in childlike faith a moment later, and there were many incredulous smiles and a few open laughs and cries of "No, no, doctor, that's

too much," and, "Come, come, now, go it gently, doctor," to which he only smiled patronizingly, at once taking another tack. At this point his eyes wandered about the company, until presently he was looking intently at, and, to all appearances, addressing himself solely to, me. As I listened, I found his words grow confusing; I wondered if the champagne or the heat of the room had made me drowsy. Then gradually, as I looked into those gleaming, deep-set eyes, his voice grew faint and far away, the objects in the room faded until I could see nothing clearly except that massive, smooth-shaven face with the lamplight shining full upon it. Finally that, too, receded, until, as I tried uselessly to arouse myself from what I felt to be a most unbecoming position, I saw only two burning coals of fire gleaming at me from apparent space; then I knew no more. Whether my unconscious state had lasted ten minutes or as many years I never could have told, but later, from the others, I learned that I had been asleep about five minutes. It was with no surprise, however, that I found myself again looking at the master of this art, and when I heard him say, "Now, Mr. Brooke, let me have that cheque, please," I found I held a paper in my hand, which I passed up to him without an instant's hesitation. He read aloud a cheque payable to himself and bearing my signature; it was for a large sum and drawn on the bank in which I was a partner. My amazement must have shown itself in my face, for he smilingly passed it back to me and asked me if it was my signature. I was bound to acknowledge it. "But where did I get the pen and ink, doctor?" I cried, thinking I had him.

"Oh, you went into the library and wrote it," he answered, — a statement in which he was upheld by the entire assembly.

Norris here interrupted with a question which brought us all back to that assertion of the doctor's which had met with such skeptical reception. This was nothing more nor less than the claim that his was the power to so thoroughly infuse the mind of a subject with a certain idea as to make that idea become a fixed fact, and the desired result follow; which assertion was crowned by the statement that the brain having sole control of the physical being, if he should suggest to some young man, the subject of a hypnotic trance, that he was an old man, decrepit and feeble,

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his subject would become so thoroughly imbued with the idea that physical transformation would follow, and a young man would grow old before our very eyes.

"I don't mind laying any reasonable wager against such a power, doctor," said our president.

"Very well," answered the doctor, "I am quite ready to accept your proposition, providing a subject can be secured who is willing to assume the risk, for I tell you frankly I do not believe that I can restore to him his youth. We may fell the sturdy oak, but who can restore it? We may destroy the most magnificent works of Nature, but who has the power to create even the most insignificant?"

A soft, musical voice broke gently in upon him, saying, "Gentlemen, I'll make you both a proposition; I am ready to have Dr. Goode try his powers on me, with one proviso, that the winner give me his winnings."

The voice belonged to Lloyd, and the attention of the entire company was attracted by his offer. One of the brightest stars among the younger journalists, his many exploits in that enterprising profession were well known to his friends and indeed to the public, but it seemed beyond belief that he would run the risk of losing his youth and strength at one blow for the sake of journalistic fame or even for a fortune, large or small. Yet the desire of the company for the experiment was at such a heat that cries of "Bravo! Good for Lloyd!" rang out, for a full minute drowning Norris's attempted reply. When finally he could make himself heard, he said, "Well, doctor, for my part, I will accept Mr. Lloyd's offer, and if I lose the wager, will present him with whatever sum you may mention."

"This is perfectly agreeable to me, Mr. President; and since the gentleman assumes such a risk of living fifty years in half as many minutes, I would suggest that we make the sum a large one for the sake of the beneficiary; would $100,000 be satisfactory?"

Ordinarily the sum named might have excited comment, but as the doctor's wealth was reported fabulous, while Norris was known to be a triple millionaire, the size of the wager seemed nothing extraordinary, and it was accepted in a moment.

"And now, gentlemen," proceeded Dr. Goode, "I must ask absolute quiet and perfect attention; you must all aid me by remaining as nearly passive as possible. As for you, Mr. Lloyd, you must give yourself quite entirely to me and not endeavor to thwart me; though," this with a confident smile, "you cannot do that if you will."

Then followed a discourse upon the power of the brain over the body, a discourse so interesting, so impressive, in short, so magnetic, that Lloyd was almost forgotten, when our attention was restored to the subject of the experiment by the doctor saying, "Now, my friend, you are not feeling very well, but it will not last long; you will soon gain more strength, but, at your age, you cannot hope to recover as rapidly as in your youth; let me see, how old did you say you were? Oh, yes; seventy on your last birthday, so it was. Well, well, that's a very good old age, though your beard is not very white yet."

I sat directly opposite Lloyd, and when the doctor made this remark about the beard, I noted that the young journalist *had* a beard, which rather confused me, for I had always thought he wore only a moustache. Meantime, Dr. Goode kept talking to him in a monotonous tone. Lloyd's eyes were closed, and he lay back in his chair as if in sleep. I cannot recall distinctly what the doctor said, but as I looked I fancied a change crossed the features of the subject; he surely did not look so young as he used. I was watching him closely, forgetful of everything save the fact that some strange fascination kept my eyes on his face. Yes, beyond a doubt, there had been some change taking place in not only his face, but his whole body, something I felt but failed to grasp. As I struggled to define the change, much as one endeavors to recall an indistinct dream, I was suddenly aware of the doctor's voice saying, "You are quite bald, aren't you, Mr. Lloyd?" and saw that person put his hand up to his head. It was actually bald, with a heavy fringe of snow-white hair ending just above his ears! I saw it distinctly, but, as I recalled afterward, it gave me no shock, but rather came as a natural sequence of the whole evening's occurrences. Then the deep voice again monotoned, "Will you kindly step over to the mirror, Mr. Lloyd?" And still unmoved, I saw that it was an old man who

left the chair and tottered around the table to the mirror over the fireplace! He smiled as he moved, but looked at none of us. When he reached that point and looked at his reflection in the glass, he turned around, and, with a cackling chuckle to the company, said, "Well, Mr. Norris, the experiment has been rather a success, don't you think?" and Norris, without a word, rose from his chair, stepped into the library for a moment, returned, and handed him a cheque. If I thought anything of his silence, it was that he was too agitated for words.

Lloyd put the cheque in his pocket, chuckled after the manner of an old man, and in a cackling voice said, "Now I hope you will excuse me, gentlemen; I'm not feeling very strong, ha! ha! ha! I'll have to get you to identify me in the morning, Mr. Norris." He ambled across the room, the door closed behind him; he was gone. With his departure the nature of the monstrous experiment we had just witnessed seemed, for the first time, to burst upon us. In a moment all our excited interest was transformed into a sickening horror, and with a common impulse we rushed panic-stricken out of the door and into the night.

We never saw Lloyd again, but we heard from him. Just a month after, our president arose at our dinner, and, drawing a letter from his pocket, said, "Gentlemen, I have a letter here from our late friend, Lloyd; it came to-day, and fully explains itself; it is as follows: —

"CARACAS, VENEZUELA, Jan. 20, 18—.

"FELLOW-MEMBERS OF THE BOHEMIAN CLUB:

"In writing to inform you of the death of Dr. Richardson Goode, of London, on his way to this place to join me, I am able to add a line which will explain to you the remarkable experiment of which you were witnesses less than a month ago. During my last visit to London, I met the late doctor at a lecture, and, becoming deeply interested in his wonderful powers, cultivated his acquaintance with a view to perfecting myself in the art. To some extent, I succeeded, and have, on several occasions — notably, the last time we dined together at the Bohemian Club — been of considerable assistance to him in influencing his subjects when he was experimenting upon several simultaneously. The doctor learned his

profession by long years of deep study in India, and I think you will agree with me when I say that he learned it well. Knowing his power as I did, an idea flashed across me. I needed money; journalism was too tedious a road to wealth; I wrote to Dr. Goode and made him a proposition. Being not over-scrupulous, he accepted it on half shares, and at once sailed for New York. The result of his trip and consequent introduction to the Bohemian Club you all know. My dear boys, it was a put-up job; he did not hypnotize *me* at all; I did not grow old; he hypnotized *you*—every one of you, with my humble aid—and made you believe you saw it all,—my aging, the tottering across the room, the bald head and cackling laugh; yes, you saw it all during hypnotic sleep! I was forced to leave you rather abruptly, owing to the waning power of the doctor over so many. Of course I needed no identification at the bank, since I had changed none, and I readily cashed the cheque and sailed for this place. But I shall leave here at once; I have made my fortune now, and intend to run no risk of prison bars, for I have bought a fine plantation in a near-by country where extradition does not obtain, and shall settle down and become an ideal cocoa planter. I dare say I shall marry one of the many beautiful señoritas of the country, and if any of you boys ever find your way down here and should run across me, you will find no heartier welcomer or more hospitable host than

"Your late companion,

"GREVILLE LLOYD."

The Misfit Gown.

BY ELMER COOK RICE.

HONOR and local fame went with the presidency of the Helping Hand Charitable Society, an organization of women from all the churches in the town of Brinkdale.

The by-laws required the president to be unmarried and under thirty years of age. According to custom, she led the grand march, with the chairman of the selectmen, at the annual ball of the society, in the town hall, the greatest event of the town's social season. She was an important assistant to the overseers of the poor. She was accepted generally as the leader of the town's jolliest set; no tea, church, or coming-out party was considered successful without her presence. The Brinkdale *Vox Populi* reported her movements faithfully in its columns. And more than all was the office coveted because the maiden who held it was certain to be married within a twelvemonth after the expiration of her term of service. This rule had held good in the cases of every one of the eleven incumbents of this position, and had come to be looked upon as law.

The society had no other officer. The president was an autocrat, and must needs possess the highest executive ability. More than that, the position was one that called for beauty, graciousness, and tact,—the principal elements of feminine popularity. All of which goes to show why the eligible young bachelors of Brinkdale had come to consider the hand in marriage of the president of the Helping Hand Charitable Society so valuable a prize.

It is hardly necessary to state that there was lively rivalry for the office.

The society was composed of nearly six hundred women, but only those between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, married or unmarried, were allowed to vote. The canvass usually began

at Thanksgiving. Election day was December 31, the date of the annual meeting, and on the night of January 1, the newly elected president was installed with elaborate exercises, followed by a reception and dance. The patronage of the office did not amount to much — only the appointment of half a dozen committees. Hence a candidate could not promise favors for support, and was obliged to run on her popularity and general fitness.

Last November, two young ladies came forth, — one boldly, the other almost shrinkingly, as if she heard the voice of the people, — and announced that they were candidates for the presidential chair.

One was Isabelle Cooper, twenty-two years old, handsome, of dark complexion and lithe figure, educated in the local high school and finished at Miss Potterlea's private seminary. Mr. Cooper was a wealthy leather jobber. Her mother was a delightful entertainer in an imposing, newly built, eighty-thousand-dollar house on Michigan Hillside, and the daughter had already proved her mettle at Brinkdale society affairs. Miss Cooper's name had been on the membership roll of the society for five years, but she had been an active member only sixteen months, her activity dating from the time of graduation from the seminary.

The other candidate was Constance James, twenty-one years old, whose aggressive work as a member of several of the society's committees had made her name prominent since graduation from the high school at the age of eighteen. She was a blonde of average height, with grayish blue eyes, waving golden hair, and a happy, intelligent face. Although forbidden by her father's straitened means from entertaining on a lavish scale, Miss James had made her modest home facing the town square a center of unaffected hospitality, and had many devoted friends.

Of course this double announcement was the signal for a spirited campaign. A rallying committee of five, including two young married women, was immediately organized to "boom" Miss Cooper. At the same time Miss James's interests were taken in hand by three active supporters; one, her chum, Rose Goodnow, the star of the Brinkdale dramatic club and the daughter of a well-known judge; the others, former classmates who knew her intimately and were with her, heart and soul.

On the evening of December 10, these three met with Miss James at her home, and discussed the situation at length. All agreed that the hardest kind of work was necessary to insure success.

"Isabelle now has more than a majority, I'm sure," announced Rose, after a careful examination of two columns of figures. "President Salsbury is on her side, and the president's influence counts for a good deal with the younger members. The two are neighbors, you know."

"Yes," said Mary Belknap, "and I am very sure that all the ten new members admitted at the last monthly meeting are going to vote for her. Her cousin looked them up and got them admitted for no purpose but to vote for Isabelle."

"Oh, how mean!" exclaimed Hope Wright, the fourth member of the conference. "I think if the society knew that, Miss Cooper never could be elected."

"Never mind," counseled the candidate. "The odds are against us, but we won't play cry-baby and give up before we are beaten."

The Cooper boomers met Christmas eve at their candidate's home on Michigan Hillside, where the usual festivities were further enlivened by loud rejoicings over the anticipated victory.

"Isabelle," finally exclaimed Mrs. Smith, "you've got a lead-pipe cinch!"

"A what?" chorused the rest in mingled amazement and alarm.

"A lead-pipe cinch," repeated Mrs. Smith. "I don't know what that is, but my husband said he had it when he received seven eighths of all the votes cast for county clerk."

"That's too good to be true," commented Miss Cooper. "I've gone over the list of all the voting members and can figure only a bare majority. But I feel pretty sure of winning. You've no idea of the troops of friends who come here and tell me they are sure I shall be elected."

"Of course you will be," encouraged Mary Yeaton. "I've figured it all out, and you are certain to get nearly two thirds of all the votes on the first ballot."

"Oh, do you really think so?" queried Miss Cooper. Then,

without waiting for a reply, she continued mysteriously: "Well, since you feel so certain, I've the greatest mind, — yes — I believe I will — let you into a secret. Only you must promise on your honor not to breathe it to a soul."

Upon receiving the assurance that wild horses would not drag from them a syllable of the proposed disclosure, Miss Cooper proceeded breathlessly:—

"Girls, I've got a new gown — from Bluefern — the New York tailor, on purpose for the installation! I've been saving my pin money for it six months, and it just came this afternoon."

"A Bluefern gown! Oh, you lucky girl! Where is it? Do let us see it!" came in excited chorus, followed by a general stampede in the direction of Miss Cooper's room. Here, the Bluefern gown, a magnificent creation of white striped silk powdered with Dresden figures and trimmed with Mechlin lace, elicited such ecstatic comments that Miss Cooper finally consented to be invested in the all-important gown by three volunteer dressers. When the last button was buttoned, and the last fold laid in place, the delight of the spectators again bubbled out in admiring ejaculations. One exclaimed over the exquisite fabric, another over the bouffant sleeves, while others still were specially impressed by the graceful hang of the voluminous skirt, measuring nearly twelve yards around, or the strikingly original arrangement of lace upon the corsage. But it was the fit of the bodice that challenged the almost worshipful admiration of every person present, and convinced all that the figure of Fate had indeed singled out their candidate for success.

"You'll make the most stunning president the club has ever seen," was Miss Yeaton's parting salute as the party broke up, after a final exchange of congratulations.

And as the little party trooped down Michigan Hillside together, they agreed that the gown must have cost at least five hundred dollars and that it was cheap at that.

The meeting of the James forces on the day following Christmas was a gloomy one. Even Hope Wright, the most sanguine, was obliged to admit that defeat seemed inevitable. "I went around on my bicycle to twenty-two of the doubtful members," said she, "and found ten of them pledged to Cooper. I won over

three, and made sure of the rest of the twenty-two. Our opponents have canvassed the society thoroughly, and unless we take extraordinary measures we are sure to be defeated."

Profound silence followed this depressing intelligence. Finally, Mary Belknap, whose father was an ex-member of the State legislature, leaned towards the others, and said impressively: —

"Girls, there is just one chance, and that is to break the forces of the Cooperites by nominating a dark horse."

"A dark horse?" murmured the others vaguely.

"Yes, a third candidate, — a girl from their ranks who will cut into Isabelle's votes at first, and make several ballots necessary. I don't think Miss Cooper's name will wear successfully through a long meeting. We shall remain firm all the time, of course, and before long there will be a stampede in our favor."

"That's a capital idea!" was Miss James's verdict. "What a politician you are! But who shall be the third candidate?"

"Sally Salstonstall," replied Mary. "She's lukewarm in her support of Miss Cooper, and she simply couldn't decline the nomination. You see, she knows it's the stepping stone to matrimony, and she's just crazy to get married.

"Now let's see; of course none of *us* can nominate her. Oh!" after a moment's silence, "I know — we'll get Carrie Holbrook to do it. But remember, — not a word of this to another soul. Now you wait while I go over to Carrie's and instruct her."

Twenty minutes later Miss Belknap burst into the room, with consternation written in every line of her face.

"Girls! what do you think!" she gasped. "Our flag is at half mast. We're licked, to speak plainly. That Isabelle Cooper has sent Christmas boxes of candy to the small children of nearly every family in the society, with New Year's cards bearing the inscription, 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.' That will make her solid with everybody."

The four sat dumb with amazement. Shrewd workers they certainly were not, in comparison with the Napoleonic managers of the rival campaign. At length Rose Goodnow broke the depressing silence: —

"Is Carrie Holbrook with us?"

"Yes," replied Miss Belknap.

"Then we'll carry through that plan; but it is not enough. Now I have a scheme. Just listen."

Four heads moved close together while the speaker, lowering her voice to a mysterious whisper, outlined a plan, the audacity of which caused her hearers to open wide their eyes, while their cheeks grew red with suppressed excitement.

"And you dare to do it?" one asked, when she finished.

"I do," replied Rose. "It's our last chance."

. . . . . .

The Cooperites spent the afternoon of December 30 in congratulating their candidate and each other over a victory that already seemed as good as won. The gift of boxes of candy to the children had been a master stroke. Indeed, a final count of her forces proved so satisfactory, that Miss Cooper called up the town florist by telephone and ordered a bouquet of American Beauty roses delivered at her home on the morning of New Year's Day. It would furnish the final touch, she told herself, to her Bluefern installation gown.

That evening, at eight o'clock, a score of dark forms struggled up Michigan Hillside through the wind and sleet to a spot less than a hundred yards from the Cooper home. As the last figure joined the little group the chief conspirator whispered: "Don't be frightened. All you need do is to steal up quietly on the lawn opposite the drawing-room windows, prepared to be eye-witnesses of what takes place. I will attend to the rest."

After a few moments of breathless expectation, a woman with ragged skirts, black shawl, muddy shoes, old-fashioned bonnet, and hair rumpled over her forehead, was seen to totter up the Cooper steps and ring the bell. There were dark circles under her eyes. Her hands trembled with cold and fatigue.

A maid in white apron and cap answered the bell.

"Is Miss Isabelle Cooper at home?" quavered the wretched object. "I want very much to see her."

The maid hesitated. Finally she said, grudgingly: "Yes, she's in, but I don't know as she can see you. Just step into the hall while I find out."

A few moments later one of the watchers outside, looking through the long windows at the big entrance hall, exclaimed:

"Here she comes, girls; now watch for all you're worth."

. . . . . .

The Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Helping Hand Society, held the following evening in the vestry of the Congregational Church, was the largest in the history of the organization. From Brinkdale, and Brinkdale Center, and South Brinkdale, — from fashionable Michigan Hillside, and from the less pretentious neighborhoods, the voters had flocked by twos, and tens, and dozens. Overburdened matrons, who, although nominally members, had for several years confined their charity to their own homes, now found themselves suddenly dragged to the scene of conflict, while no less than three semi-invalid voters were also driven thither in hacks provided by enthusiastic electioneerers. Half an hour after the president's gavel had called the meeting to order, the church vestry was crowded with an assembly of agitated womankind, ranged according to their political preference on the right and left of the room, and eyeing each other like members of hostile camps. The air was simply electric with suppressed excitement. Routine business had been rushed through at telegraphic speed, and the names of Miss Isabelle Cooper and Miss Constance James had been placed before the meeting in the briefest possible nominating speeches. It was at this point, when the election seemed to have resolved itself into a tug of war between two opposing forces, that the unexpected happened. Miss Carrie Holbrook arose, and in a most eloquent speech nominated Miss Sally Salstonstall as a third candidate for the presidency, much to the surprise of that young lady, who half rose in her chair as straggling applause broke out at the mention of her name, and then sank back again, blushing violently.

The Cooperites stared at each other in bewilderment. What was the meaning of this new move? Before they had become articulate in their surprise, a motion was put by one of the James faction that they proceed to ballot, and as there was no excuse for delay, the motion was carried, and tellers were appointed to collect the votes. Amid profound silence the three tellers made their rounds, and, emptying their boxes on a table beside the president's desk, proceeded to a count. Fifteen minutes later, after a series of comparisons and recounts, during which the faces

of the tellers were eagerly scanned by every woman in the room for some tell-tale change of expression, the result was made known as follows:

Whole number of votes cast	203
Necessary to a choice	102
Isabelle Cooper	95
Constance James	80
Sally Salstonstall	27

"There being no majority for any one candidate, the house will proceed to another ballot," said the president.

The Cooper forces were elated. Only seven more votes and their candidate would be elected! But why does not Sally Salstonstall decline the nomination in favor of Isabelle Cooper? With her votes they can win by a wide margin.

During the balloting a deputation from the Cooper workers swarmed around Miss Salstonstall, pleading that she withdraw her name. But Miss Salstonstall was not to be so easily disposed of. Already a representative of the James forces had convinced her that she held the key of the situation, and at their earnest request she decided to remain in the contest for one more ballot.

For the first time a tremor of misgiving ran through the Cooper forces. While the tellers were counting the votes for the second ballot, they exchanged anxious whispers, and, as the chief teller rose to announce the result, one of the most emotional members of the faction giggled hysterically. Meanwhile the James forces waited, with a stolidity borne of a desperate cause, for the report from the second ballot. It was as follows:

Whole number of votes cast	201
Necessary to a choice	101
Isabelle Cooper	98
Constance James	83
Sally Salstonstall	20

And again there was no choice.

At this point the seesaw of politics tipped to a new angle. Miss Sally Salstonstall, the dark horse candidate, rose slowly from

her chair, and while a ripple of excitement ran through the assembly, in a voice tremulous with feeling, extended her thanks to her friends for the high honor they had conferred upon her. Then after modestly insisting that the honor was unsought, and more than she was worthy of, Miss Salstonstall concluded: —

"Fellow-members, withdraw my name, and ask all my friends — to whom, in conclusion, I again express my thanks for their fidelity and their unswerving support — to vote for Miss Isabelle Cooper."

There was a tremendous outburst of enthusiasm at the end of Miss Salstonstall's remarks. Miss Cooper smilingly acknowledged the congratulations of a score of friends. The James faction sat silent and pale, but with dogged determination in their faces. Miss Goodnow alone wore a smile that was childlike and bland. Yet even those who were in the secret hardly dared hope that one of her mammoth sleeves concealed the winning card. But all felt that now, if ever, was the time for this descendant of a long line of eminent jurists to prove her mettle.

But Miss Goodnow still remained silent, while, amid a suspense so keen that the air seemed fairly snapping with electricity, it was moved and seconded that the meeting proceed to a third ballot. Suddenly, just as the president was about to put the question, there rang out a clear, low voice: —

"Miss President."

It was Rose Goodnow. She stood at the very back of the vestry, cool and self-possessed, in the midst of the turmoil that her sudden move had created. As she waited for the president's recognition, a whisper that the girl was going to withdraw the name of her candidate flew from ear to ear. The James faction exchanged stupefied glances, and the Cooper workers waxed more and more triumphant.

After a moment's pause the president said, "Miss Goodnow has the floor."

"Miss President," continued the speaker, "I rise to a question of privilege."

The president hurriedly consulted her Cushing's Manual of Parliamentary Practise, a slight blush rising to her cheeks as some one tittered. Miss Goodnow scowled impressively.

After a period of nerve-racking silence, President Salsbury commanded: —

"State the privilege."

"I wish to ask permission of one of the candidates to withdraw her name from the meeting."

"Does any member object?" asked the president.

Profound silence greeted the question. The Cooperites, eager for the withdrawal of Miss James's name, certainly had no inclination to object, and the rest were too much bewildered to interpose.

"The chair hears no objection," said the president. "Miss Goodnow has the floor."

The young lady's manner changed. She smiled significantly, and, with head erect, walked rapidly down the aisle and faced the meeting. As she paused for a moment and swept the assembly with an assured glance, the Cooperites sat bolt upright or leaned forward eagerly, even apprehensively. Certainly the alert manner and clean-cut face of the girl betrayed no sign of weakening; instead, from her dark eyes gleamed a fire inherited from a double line of celebrated lawyers and jurists, — a fire so intense that her audience waited breathlessly, as for the peal of thunder sure to follow upon a flash of lightning. But except for that light in her eyes Miss Goodnow was, to all appearances, perfectly calm.

"Fellow-members of the Helping Hand Charitable Society," she began, in a low, impressive voice, rendered all the more impressive by the solemn hush that had now spread over the gathering, "I do not rise to-night to champion the cause of any one; neither do I address you in the interests of any clique or party."

Here she paused for a moment, as if to see the effect of her words, and a shrill whisper of amazement ran around the room, ceasing, however, with her next words.

"No, fellow-members, the matter which I am about to lay before you is one which involves the welfare of our entire society, a matter which demands such consideration as rises far above the plane of mere personal feelings and prejudices.

"But first," drawing a tablet from her pocket, "let me call your attention to our by-laws. I quote from Page 8, Section 1, 'Name and Object': —

"'The name of this society shall be the Helping Hand Charitable Society.

"'Its object shall be, as its name implies, to give a helping hand to all persons in distress, whatever their race, religion, or condition.

"'Its motto shall be the Golden Rule.'"

At this a few significant glances were turned upon Miss Cooper, who blushed furiously in remembrance of the boxes of candy and New Year's cards.

The speaker went on slowly and impressively.

"Now, fellow-members, I ask you to picture in your mind's eye a certain magnificent home on Michigan Hillside, where the daughter of the family lives surrounded by every luxury that wealth can give. (Subdued murmurs.) Last night, in the midst of the storm and sleet, there appeared at the door of this mansion a miserable, wretched-appearing woman, who related in a voice choked with sobs, that her husband, a hard-working carpenter, had been laid up for a month with a broken leg. Their little savings were gone, and she was compelled to take in washing to provide the bare necessities of life for eight small children. And, in addition to these troubles, the poor woman's appearance indicated that she had but a few years on this earth, that consumption was slowly eating her life away."

A thrill of sympathy ran through the assembly. Miss Cooper forced a weak smile of derision. But the orator, borne swiftly along by the current of her own eloquence, continued unheedingly: —

"And how did the young lady of the house show her charity to the sufferer? Did she say, 'Rest here, while I get you food and warm clothes for your chilled body?' Did she provide for that suffering family?

"No, fellow-members; I happen to know that instead that unhappy woman was put through a course of questions such as these: 'What church do you attend? Have you ever applied to the town for aid? Does your husband ever use strong drink? Do your children go to Sabbath school?' And that, after having been submitted to this painful and humiliating ordeal, this poor sufferer was dismissed with a promise that her case should be investigated next week!

"And what, fellow-members, what do you suppose was the final reason given by that young lady for refusing aid to the sufferer? Nothing more nor less than the plea that she had used all the means at her disposal in sending Christmas boxes to two hundred children of this city.

"Yes," proceeded Miss Goodnow, unmoved by the sudden tumult aroused by her last words, "yes, it was with such words as these that she showed the miserable creature to the door and let her go out into the night and the storm, without money, without food, without even so much as a pitying word."

By this time the excitement was at white heat. Muffled sobs rose from every corner, and fans and smelling-bottles had been pressed into service all over the vestry. Indeed, so severe was the nervous strain that three overwrought women were supported, half fainting, to the door, while Isabelle Cooper sank in a semi-swoon against the shoulder of her chief lieutenant.

But still that relentless voice continued: "Fellow-members — dear friends — as you know, long experience has shown that the highest office in this club is the stepping-stone to early matrimony. Upon our choice of president hangs more than the development of the Helping Hand's purposes, high and noble though they be; yes, upon our choice, stamping as it does the successful candidate as a representative of the highest and noblest type of woman, depends the future of a home, the destinies of unborn generations.

"Now, fellow-members," concluded the orator solemnly, "having heard so much, you know, without any words of mine, the name of the young lady on Michigan Hillside. What you do not know, however, is this, — *I was the old woman!*"

For just a second a dazed stillness, like that following the explosion of a bomb, held the entire assembly.

Then, as from a score of members, burst the cry, "That's so; we saw her," the room suddenly resounded with loud sobs and hysterical laughter. Some overwrought members of the James force literally fell upon each other's necks, while the Cooperites, with drawn faces, crowded together in the feverish desperation of those who see the destruction of their last hope.

As for Isabelle Cooper, she started bolt upright, restored to

consciousness as if by magic by this master-stroke of the enemy, and sat staring in rigid expectancy at the relentless orator.

But Miss Goodnow, having marked the effect of her final shot, had no mind to weaken its effect. "Fellow-members," she said briefly, "on second thought, I will not ask permission of a certain candidate to withdraw her name. Rather, I leave it to your sense of duty and right, to see that to-night the Helping Hand Charitable Society remains loyal to its high and noble principles.

"Miss President, I move that we proceed to a third ballot."

Hardly had Miss Goodnow taken her seat, when the able lieutenant of the Cooper party was on her feet.

"Miss President and fellow-members," she began, "since the honor of our candidate has been questioned, I hereby withdraw the name of Miss Cooper, and, as the hour is late, move that, to facilitate proceedings, the chief teller be instructed to cast one ballot for Miss Constance James."

Upon which, amid sobs and laughter and cries of "What's the matter with Miss James? She's all right," the motion was seconded and carried by a thundering and unanimous "Aye."

And, as the result of the third ballot, Miss Constance James was formally declared the president of the Helping Hand Charitable Society.

. . . . . .

A few days later an expressman called at the Michigan Hillside mansion and took away a huge box, inside of which lay a mass of silk and lace, accompanied by the following note: —

"Messrs. Bluefern & Co., Fifth Avenue, New York.

"*Gentlemen:* — My daughter Isabelle complains that the inclosed costume does not fit. She will call and see you in a week or so, and make some mutually agreeable arrangement with regard to a cold-weather garment.

"Very truly yours,

"James W. Cooper.

"Brinkdale, January 7."

The Shifting Sand.

BY C. C. VAN ORSDALL.

I HAD been knocking about the mountains for several weeks, when one evening I found myself in front of a little cabin, nestling at the foot of a great mountain, and facing a level stretch of sandy plain, dotted with clumps of sage-brush. My horses were tired from an unusually hard day's jaunt, and I was so weary of the solitude of the great trees and hills, and the monotony of self-communion, that I was very glad to pitch camp for the night in a place that promised human companionship.

Dismounting, I removed the saddle from the animal I had been riding, and was busy untying the cords which bound my camp outfit to the other, when I noticed both animals prick up their ears and look intently across the plain. Turning in that direction, I saw coming slowly toward me the figure of a man, — an old man, apparently, for his long hair and longer beard were snowy white, and his tall form was bent, as with the weight of years. He was dressed in the ordinary garb of a miner — heavy high-top boots, blue denim overalls and "jumper," and broad-brimmed white hat. In one hand he carried a long staff, which he occasionally thrust sharply into the sand as he advanced, pausing frequently for a backward glance across the plain. When he had drawn nearer, I noticed that his staff was peculiarly shod with a long, sharp piece of steel. He was within a few yards of where I stood, when, turning from a last backward glance, his eyes met mine; deep-set, penetrating eyes, looking out from beneath heavy white eyebrows, and taking in with one quick, comprehensive glance my whole array of intruding forces. I am not by nature a timid man, and years of frontier life have given me an assurance which seldom deserts me; but I do not mind confessing that, as I looked into those eyes, I felt decidedly uneasy as to my reception. I knew

instinctively that I stood in the presence of no ordinary backwoodsman, whose rude hospitality belongs to every wayfarer by the right of an unwritten law of frontier etiquette. The cordial note of his rich voice, as he bade me "good-evening," reassured me so much, however, that I asked permission to stay all night, hastening to add my name, address, and occupation. He readily assented, and, after showing me where to picket my horses, led the way into the cabin, where he soon prepared a supper to which I did the full justice of a keen appetite.

When the table had been cleared away, and a fresh log laid upon the fire, I got out my pipe and tobacco, offering my host some of the latter, which he accepted; and we were soon chatting together with that cordial good-fellowship peculiar to men under the influence of the seductive weed. I had confided to him my mania for "prospecting," still persistent after years of fruitless efforts to "strike it rich"; and there had fallen between us a short silence, during which I allowed my thoughts to drift away to a sweet-faced woman whom I had loved silently, hopelessly, for so many years.

Suddenly my host's voice recalled me to the present.

"A mania you called it," he was saying; "and rightly, too, as are all other forms of our greed for gold. God knows no one can realize this truth more bitterly than I."

The weariness in his voice impressed me painfully. And as the lighted match which he held to his pipe flared up, I noted with new interest the deep-set eyes, out of which all gladness had gone, the fine, shapely head, with its crown of snowy hair, the broad sweep of white forehead, and the rugged lines of the face which must have been handsome in youth. I was speculating as to what his story might be — for that he had a story that set him apart from the common run of men everything about him plainly declared — when he took his pipe from his mouth, and, without preface or apology, began: —

"I have lived in this cabin for eighteen years, never leaving it except for semi-annual visits to the little town across the mountains for my supplies. Eighteen years ago this month I discovered a rich ledge, bearing gold and silver, up the mountain side about a mile. I had high hopes and worked hard, for I possessed

the mightiest incentive that can nerve a man to wrest a fortune from fate, — a loving little woman back in New England awaited my return. Her father, a wealthy, hard-headed old farmer, disapproved of me on general principles, but especially because of my poverty. When I had ten thousand dollars in cash, he said, I might claim her for my wife. We believed the condition equivalent to a refusal of my suit, for the toiling and saving of a lifetime would scarcely win that much money from the few stony acres I possessed. But youth is hopeful and resourceful; so I left my sweetheart, who promised, amid her tears, to be faithful till death, and started for the golden West. I had poor success, however, and at the end of five years was little better off than when I left home. Then it was that I stumbled quite accidentally upon the ledge up the mountain-side, so accidentally that I believed it nothing short of providential. Poor fool!"

He laughed bitterly, and then sat watching the smoke which curled in fantastic wreaths from his pipe.

"For some time I worked as seldom man worked before, as man can work only when nerved by such hopes as were mine. But I was soon forced to the conclusion that I must have assistance and machinery to develop my mine, both of which required capital, — and that I did not have. One day I set out on foot across the mountain in search of some one who would advance the necessary capital for an interest in my mine. You may be sure that it was only after a severe struggle that I brought myself to this step. In the first place, I was so greedy for gold that I dreaded sharing the profits with any one else; and, on the other hand, it was no easy matter to induce any one to invest in a quartz mine, for this section was then mad on placer mining. Upon reaching town I went straight to the post-office, where, as I expected, I found a letter from my sweetheart. I carried it unopened to my room at the hotel, and sat down to read it, thinking that it would give me new courage for my quest.

The old man paused. Something in his voice kept me silent, too, though I longed to question him as to the outcome of his story. Suddenly he roused himself from his reverie and continued as abruptly as he had ceased.

"I need not tell you that my letter contained a story as old as love itself — the story of woman's faithlessness. It put out the light of my life at one cruel blow. I did not heed the protestations, all blotted with her tears; I grasped only the one vital point that she was no longer mine to win, since she had yielded her vows to a richer man; and the bitterness of this blinded me to all else. All night long I sat with the letter in my hand, and when morning came I started home, following the instinct which leads the wounded animal back to its familiar haunts to die.

"For a long, long time I lay in my little bunk yonder, praying for death, and then there grew in my mind the suggestion of suicide. In a stupid way I reviewed all the routes to eternity at my disposal; but with the fastidiousness of a sick brain, I rejected them, one after another. There was my rifle or my hunting knife, but the thought of their bloody mutilation turned me sick. Then there was a rope, and there," pointing to the stout beam over our heads, "was the impromptu gallows."

At this grewsome suggestion I could not repress a shudder, and was glad that my tell-tale face was hidden by the gathering gloom.

"But I was something of a gentleman in my youth, and hanging was too suggestive of the felon to be pleasant. I got up at last, and dragged myself outside the cabin. Sitting in the sunshine, I lifted my eyes to the westward, and then leaped to my feet, shouting for insane joy. A great bank of gray clouds lay almost touching the mountain tops, and in those clouds was the solution of the riddle of my taking off. I was mad, you see."

He refilled and relighted his pipe before proceeding.

"You noticed this evening the level stretch of plain to the eastward. The soil is a loose, light sand, and the terrific winds which occasionally sweep down over the mountains play mad pranks with it. Great hills and hollows are piled up and scooped out, familiar landmarks are obliterated, and new ones uncovered to-day, and to-morrow the inconstant wind will undo its work, leaving the plain as level as a floor. In the bank of clouds I saw the promise of one of these periodic storms, and like an inspiration

to my muddled brain, came the idea of fashioning myself a grave, in which I could lie down, allowing the wind to wrap me deeply in a winding-sheet of sand. To think was to act. With a nervous energy, born of my madness, I seized a spade and hastened out into the plain."

The old man got up and went to the door. The full moon had climbed well up the heavens, shedding a soft, weird glory over the plain.

"It wasn't far, just out yonder, at the foot of a giant sage-bush that I chose the spot for my grave."

I had arisen and stood beside him, looking out across the sand, dotted with numberless sage-bushes, lifting their stunted limbs to the sky. I had no idea which particular shrub he meant, but the awesome story, and his motionless, intent attitude, which recalled his frequent halting and backward glances, as I had watched him coming across the plain in the evening, kept me dumb. He stood thus for some time, and then, with a deep sigh, resumed his seat; but I dropped down upon the doorstep; the moonlight was pleasanter than the ghostly shadows of the cabin.

"I worked rapidly, pausing for an occasional reassuring glance at the bank of clouds. I had scooped out the sand to a depth of perhaps three feet, when the point of my spade unexpectedly came in contact with a hard surface."

"The bed rock?" I ventured, as the old man stopped short, as though overcome by the memories he had invoked.

"No — and this was what surprised, almost terrified me. I knew that the sand was from ten to twenty feet deep, and that it was impossible that I could have reached bed rock so close to the surface. Carefully pushing the point of my spade about, I found that the obstruction was apparently circular, and perhaps three feet in diameter. A few moments' work cleared away the intervening sand, disclosing a flat, round rock. Using my spade as a pry, I lifted the rock slowly from its resting place, and perhaps you can imagine my surprise when I uncovered the dark mouth of a well. I am not naturally a physical coward, but my nerves were so unstrung by all that had gone before, that it was several minutes before I could bring myself to investigate this unexpected development of my grave. At last, however, I secured

a pitch stick from the cabin for a torch, and returned to follow this new 'lead' to its conclusion. Thrusting the lighted stick into the opening, I found that the well was about four feet deep and that the sides were walled with rough stones fitted together without mortar. At the bottom, on one side, was a small opening. Lowering myself into the well, I thrust the torch ahead and cautiously crawled through this opening, to find myself in a small chamber high enough to admit of my standing upright. The walls of the chamber were of the same rude masonry as the well, while the ceiling was composed of stout poles, laid closely together and resting upon the stone walls. Raising the torch above my head, I made a rapid survey of the room.

Scattered about the floor were rude implements of stone, specimens of primitive pottery, — small jars, covered and uncovered, — bows and arrows of gaily painted wood, arrow heads, and spear points. I knew, at once, that I was standing in an ancient Indian grave, and was, therefore, partly prepared for the ghastly picture which was revealed when the light of the torch put the host of lurking shadows to flight. Sitting bolt upright against the farther wall, grotesquely hideous with feathers and other savage adornments, and wrapped about with gaudy robes, falling away from the skeleton forms in decaying tatters, were three figures. It was not a pleasant sight, nor one I cared to look upon — the dark faces with their rows of shining teeth, from which the withered lips were drawn in sardonic grins, and the staring caverns, which the flickering light filled with phantom eyes.

"I turned again, with idle curiosity, to the pottery. Pushing off the cover of the jar nearest me, I cautiously thrust my hand into the mouth, and lifted it full to the light; and then I dropped upon my knees, staring stupidly at the glittering heap of yellow sand in my open palm, asking myself if I were dreaming. Ounces of pure, bright gold! As the stupendous fact worked itself through my bewildered brain, I laughed aloud, moving from jar to jar. All told the same story, save two; gold, and full almost to the brim! Gold enough for a king's ransom, and all mine for the taking! And then upon my elation broke the flood of my misery. I was rich now, but, O God, of what use? With the irony of an accursed fiend, fortune had waited until I was ready

to die, until my hopes were already dead, and then overwhelmed me with her golden shower. I raved and cursed until I was exhausted, and then fell prone upon the floor, overcome by my passion. Presently I grew calmer. The storm of my rage had carried away with it all pain and disappointment. The basilisk glitter of the gold had got into my eyes, conjuring into life another sort of demon than despair. I was rich, and riches meant much; more than love or happiness, perhaps. Riches meant power — and revenge. I could go back to my old home and live like a prince, *her* next-door neighbor. Many things come to him who has the patience to wait and the money to do. I had both, and would be ready when the time came to pay off her father, her husband, herself, in the devil's coin of hate, the debt I owed them.

"So long I gloated over my suddenly acquired wealth, and my wild imaginings of revenge, that the charnel-house air of the chamber extinguished my torch, leaving me in Egyptian darkness. With a muttered curse at my stupidity, I flung the useless stick away, and, groping about, caught up one of the precious jars, and worked my way to the opening. It was no easy task without a light, and I was very glad to find myself at last in the well, still holding the jar against my rapidly beating heart. When I lifted my face above the opening of the well, I was greeted with a blinding, biting shower of sand. The storm, which was to have been my sexton, had come, and, as if to punish me for my defection, buffeted me most cruelly. Carefully replacing the cover to the well, after I had climbed out, I lifted my jar of gold in my arms and started for the cabin. The sky was overcast, and the blinding, whirling sheets of sand so bewildered and exhausted me that once or twice I thought I should have to give up trying to reach shelter. At last, however, I stumbled across the threshold of this room, more dead than alive, and I believe I never before or since was so glad to get inside these four walls.

"All night long the wind raged with a fury I have never known since in the long years of my residence here. When morning came, my first thought was of my treasure-house. I hastily dressed and stepped outside. The sun was just above the horizon, smiling genially upon the quiet landscape, which some

way looked very strange to my anxious eyes, as they sought the particular sage-bush which marked the entrance to the grave. Not a landmark could I see. With fiendish malignity the wind had effaced every familiar bush, and hillock, and ravine. The plain lay glittering in the sunlight, a gray, level, interminable waste of sand. I returned to the cabin disappointed and chagrined, but not uneasy; and thinking myself lucky to have fetched one jar with me, I stooped and stroked its ugly sides with a miser's tenderness. Then, to reassure myself by a sight of the yellow dust, I put my hand into the jar and lifted it full to the light.

"I think I went mad again for a moment, for when I came to myself I was standing over the shattered jar, looking down upon its scattered contents, which twinkled in the patch of sunlight from the open door — white, red, and yellow beads! In the darkness I had got hold of one of the only two jars in the grave which did not contain gold."

"But surely you found the grave again," I said.

The old man shook his head. "From that day to this I have been searching for the entrance to the grave. I have gone over every foot of yon sand. Storms have swept over it, casting up and tearing down hillocks, covering and uncovering sage-brush; but never once revealing the secret held fast in the shifting sand. Day after day, armed with my steel-shod pole, I've sought, so fruitlessly that I should be tempted to believe the whole thing a delusion of my overwrought mind, were it not for the shattered jar and the beads which I have in my cupboard. I cannot tear myself away from the accursed, hopeless search, which has grown to be a mania that nothing but death can cure."

The sky had become overcast as he ceased, and the soft soughing of the pines told of a rising wind.

"It is going to blow to-night, and that means no sleep for me," said my host, arousing as from a dream, after a long silence; "but you are tired, and I have thoughtlessly kept you awake. Let me show you where to make your bed."

I was soon stretched between blankets and left alone to sleep. But the strange story to which I had just listened had so impressed me that for hours I lay awake, thinking how curiously the man's early history coincided with my own. The mania for

gold, the incentive to treasure hunting — love for a beautiful woman — the exile to the mountains, all were the same; only in my case the woman loved was bound to me by no spoken tie. Years ago I had vowed that I would never ask Agnes to be my wife until I had made a fitting home for her, and it had been this apparently hopeless ambition that had sent me away to the mountains, where I determined to remain until either death or fortune cured me of my mania. To-night, as I lay revolving in my mind every detail in the story of my host, I feel that death alone would effect the cure.

Just as I sank into a light slumber a lusty halloo shook my drowsy senses, then voices and the tramping of horses broke irregularly into the softer monotony of the rising wind, and presently my host entered with some one, who, like myself, spread his blankets upon the floor, and then, lulled by the wind, I fell fast asleep.

When I awoke the sun was streaming in at the open door of the cabin. Leisurely dressing myself, I went outside to look after my horses, and met the stranger, a prospector, like myself. As we exchanged words of greeting, my eyes traveled carelessly across the plain until they were arrested by an object lying at the foot of a giant shrub, an object so like the figure of a man that I broke off what I was saying and ran swiftly towards it, with a strange fear tugging at my heart, — a fear soon justified. Lying on his back, his white face upturned to the smiling sky, I found my old host, his madness cured at last. Grasped firmly in both hands, and lying partly across his dead body, was the steel-shod pole, the point thrust deeply into the loose sand. Together, the stranger and I carried him to the cabin, and then I went to bring the coroner from the settlement across the mountain, leaving the stranger to keep vigil. As the last rays of the setting sun slanted across the fateful plain, we buried him close by his cabin door, with the crumpled, time-seared letter from his sweetheart hidden over his peaceful heart. The coroner took possession of his effects, among which we found the broken jar and the beads. The next morning we separated and went our several ways. For two days I traveled, and then a thought, which had haunted me ever since I found the old man lying dead, caused me to retrace